

Columbian Block
1301-1307 East Cary
Richmond
Virginia

HABS NO. VA-842

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

COLUMBIAN BLOCK

Location: 1301-1307 East Cary Street (southeast corner of East Cary Street and Shockoe Slip), Richmond, Virginia

Present Owner: Andrew J. Asch, Jr.

Present Occupant: Various lessees

Present Use: Warehouse

Statement of Significance: The present building, on the site of the well-known Columbian Hotel, served Richmond for some years as a commodity exchange and is a distinctive later-nineteenth century building in downtown Richmond. Its stuccoed facade with the cobblestone piazza to the west forms a picturesque center for the commercial area of lower East Cary Street--a focal point which, if renovated, could be the beginning of a new era for this colorful section of downtown Richmond.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1870.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

1851 The Columbian Block, consisting of "Columbian Hotel, old part," Columbian Hotel, "new part," "Tavern Dining Room, Heatstore ... (and) stable." was insured by its owner, Spotswood D. Crenshaw, for \$20,500. (Mutual Assurance Society policy #16,021). This parcel of land was long associated with hospitality and taverns, for the home of Mrs. Mary Randolph, author of the celebrated cookbook, originally stood on the site. Later, Mrs. Randolph's house was incorporated into the Columbian Hotel which Spotswood D. Crenshaw enlarged and improved during the 1850's. (Samuel Mordecai, Richmond in By-Gone Days, p. 129.)

1853 Columbian Hotel, as advertised in the Dispatch 27 June 1853, was being enlarged by the addition of an eighty-foot rear section.

1857 The remains of Mrs. Mary Randolph's house were destroyed during Crenshaw's renovations. (Mordecai, Richmond, p. 129.)

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- 1859 As advertised in the Virginia Index, 13 December 1959, the Columbian Hotel was "now open ... thoroughly repaired" with a main building five stories high.
- 1865 The Columbian Hotel was destroyed by fire during the evacuation of Richmond.
- 1871 A deed was recorded dividing the Columbian Hotel property among the heirs of Spotswood Crenshaw. The above property was referred to as lots 7 and 8 and was shown on a plat made by J. J. Pleasants, 19 July 1866. Lot 7, the corner lot, was valued at \$2,047.39 and Lot 8 at \$4,550. These two lots were allotted to James R. Crenshaw. James R. Crenshaw, in turn, conveyed the property to Ann W. Crenshaw.
- 1871-1916 The Crenshaw family continued to own the property and, by inheritance and other conveyances, the lots in question came into the possession of Abigail Crenshaw.
- 1916 Abigail Crenshaw left the property by will to Mary Grant Crenshaw. (Will Book 14, 557).
- 1925 Mary Grant Crenshaw conveyed the property to S. F. Padgett. (D. B. 315A, 164).
- 1940 S. F. Padgett died and by will left the property to his three children. (Will Book 51, 432).
- 1965 Samuel F. Padgett, Jr., et al., and State Planters Bank, administrators for the Arthur L. Padgett estate, sold the property to Andrew J. Asch for \$25,000. (D. B. 634A, 794).

4. Original plans and construction: None known.

5. Alterations and additions: None.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Not known.

2. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deeds and tax assessor records in Richmond City Hall.

Mutual Assurance Society Declarations #4420 and 16021.

3. Secondary and published sources:

Mordecai, Samuel. Richmond in By-Gone Days, p. 129.

Richmond Dispatch, 27 June 1853.

Virginia Index, 13 December 1859.

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Prepared by (Mrs.) Margaret T. Peters
Researcher
12 May 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Within the trapezoidal plan of a three-story structure, a commodity exchange on the upper two stories as well as four street-front stores have been combined. To the Italianate architectural features have been added the more personal touches of an off-center and rather understated western entrance to the upper two floors, and the rounded northwest corner at the intersection of East Cary and Thirteenth Streets. The structure's position on the east side of triangular Shockoe Slip with its cobblestones and fountain produces a picturesque Old World flavor.
2. Condition of fabric: Except for a section of the third-floor ceiling which has fallen in and several broken windows, the structure is in fair condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Cary Street (north) front, approximately 98-1/2 feet, eleven-bay front; Shockoe Slip (west) front, approximately 98 feet, eight-bay front; one bay on rounded northwest corner.
2. Foundations: Brick, mostly five course American bond.
3. Wall construction: Brick covered with stucco except for plain brick rear wall (south) and finished brick of the Cary Street store fronts.
4. Framing: Closely spaced joists set into brick walls.
5. Porch: Shockoe Slip entranceway has iron pediment projecting from wall supported by consoles.
6. Chimneys: Nine brick stacks visible from ground.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: All of the seven entrances have

double doors except for the corner one; the Cary Street store doors have two lights per door over a panel below, are flanked by brick piers separating the doors from the windows, and have a three light transom above. 44. Rich 91-

- b. Windows: Cary Street front has large six-over-six sash store windows with granite sills. The first-floor windows on Shockoe Slip are six-over-six sash with no decorative trim while the upper story windows have iron cornice-shelf lintels and iron sills. Blind windows are used on the rounded corner.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hipped roof covered with tin.
- b. Cornice: Modillioned and dentilled cornice made of sheet metal is used on the eaves of all three visible sides as well as between the first and second floor on the north and west fronts.
- c. Cupola: Low rectangular cupola has had most openings boarded up; it is centered on the large exchange hall on the third floor and furnishes light for it.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Consists of a series of four stores which front on Cary Street; #1307 and #1305 are rectangular, but the trapezoidal shape of the building block creates an angular rear wall at #1303 and a triangular office at #1301.
- b. Second floor: A stair from the Shockoe Slip entrance leads up to a broad hall which provides access to four rooms across the north front. Three rooms in the rear are divided by a cross hall which separates a large east room from two smaller west rooms.
- c. Third floor: A curving stair leads up to the large exchange hall with a trapezoidal shaped office at the northwest corner separated by a partition composed of six-over-six sash windows over a plain dado. The stairs separate the office from a small triangular shaped bath and closet behind.

- 2. Stairways: In the Cary Street stores, simple wooden stairs lead to the basement along the side walls. The Shockoe Slip entrance stairs to the upper floors are composed of granite.

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for the first five steps and then become iron up to the second floor. The curving stair leading up to the third floor is of wood with turned balusters. 44. Rich 91.

3. Flooring: The floors are of random-width pine.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The first floor has plaster on the walls and ceiling with a dado of vertical beaded boarding in #1301 and in a small office at the northwest corner of #1307. The other stores are unplastered. The third floor has plaster walls and ceiling with a dao, but the second floor has plaster walls and ceiling with a simple baseboard.
5. Doorways and doors: Doors throughout are of the Victorian four-paneled type with two tall panels at the top and two shorter ones below. Door moldings for the most part consist of the Victorian variant of the architrave framing with the exception of one on the second floor between the two front rooms next to the corner which uses corner blocks with fluted framing.
6. Decorative features and trim: The exchange hall on the third floor has two rows of tall iron Corinthian columns supporting the ceiling of the large open area. Mantels in most rooms are framed by pilasters supporting a plain entablature.
7. Notable hardware: None.
8. Lighting: Skylights are located in several rooms on the second floor and a large central skylight was placed in the exchange hall. One gaslight fixture remains in room above #1307. No electric lights have been installed on upper floors but are used in stores on Cary Street.
9. Heating: Coal-burning fireplaces are located in most rooms of the upper stories. Later wood-burning stoves are used in the basements and first floors of some of the stores.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Columbian block is placed in a commercial district of stores and warehouses of similar date but mostly being of smaller size. Due to the hilly nature of the land and the grading of the streets, the basement of the structure is one ground level in the rear with a one story high retaining wall on the west between that level and the street grade of Shockoe Slip.
2. Walks: Cement sidewalks on north and west front; Shockoe Slip is paved with cobblestone.

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Prepared by Tucker H. Hill
Architectural Historian 91
Virginia Historic
Landmarks Commission
12 May 1969

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the Richmond Photo-Data Project, undertaken in 1967 by HABS in cooperation with the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. During the period from July, 1967 to October, 1969, records were made of 11 historic structures in Richmond. The project primarily recorded examples of the cast-iron commercial architecture for which the city is known, though other building types are also included.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. James W. Moody, Jr., Executive Director, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, directed the operation in Richmond. Professor Paul Delaney of the University of Virginia School of Architecture assisted in the selection of subjects covered. Historical and architectural data were furnished by Messrs. Tucker Hill and Calder Loth, Architectural Historians of the Commission's staff. Photographer was Edward F. Heite, also on the staff of the Commission.